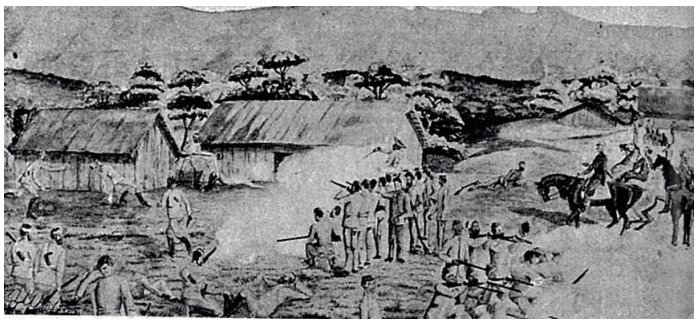
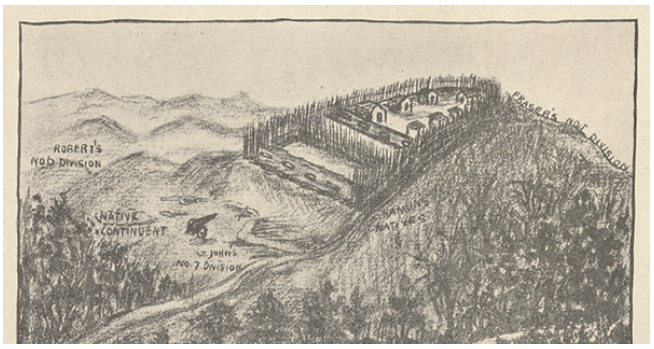
Issue Ten March 2019

aargh!

Aotearoa Anarchist Review





Terror in Aotearoa

EDITORIAL

WE HAVE BEEN MEANING to produce issue ten of aargh for some time, but were short of articles. So if you want to see an issue eleven, please contribute. Ask your friends and flatmates to contribute. There are many subjects that we have never covered because our usual contributors aren't involved in those struggles or issues. So we need you. Seriously.

The few articles we had ready to go at the end of last year were focussing of the rise of the far right. We felt that this was a topic that was seriously underestimated in NZ, so we should write about it.

Then "Christchurch happened". Now the subject is in the spotlight and our writing is outdated because we no longer need to tell people what can happen if racism, Islamophobia and white supremacy aren't fought immediately wherever they raise their (skin)heads.

Some of the writing is also slightly inaccurate because events have overtaken us and also because the far-right scene has changed since 15/3. But you'll work that out yourselves. Rather than re-writing everything, we decided to publish it the way it is.

We certainly don't want to take anything away from the outpouring of support and solidarity with the families affected by the fascist mass murder in Christchurch. The solidarity is great and we need to keep it going once the media attention moves to other things.

But when people say "This is not NZ", we feel that it should be pointed out that terrorism isn't entirely new to NZ. We have collected a small sample of historic terrorist acts - Rangiaowhia, Ngatapa and Parihaka were all cases where defenceless civilians were attacked by armed gunmen. These should also not be forgotten.

The remainder of the texts is just us still dreaming about the revolution...

TERROR IN AOTEAROA

Remember, remember, the fifth of November

THE SETTLEMENT of Parihaka was a collectively organised and self-sufficient community of several thousand people that had attracted Māori whose land had earlier been confiscated by the colonial troops. Despite the residents being non-violent, Parihaka was seen by the government as the "headquarters of fanaticism and disaffection".

On 5 November 1881, 1600 Armed Constabulary and volunteers invaded Parihaka. The people of Parihaka welcomed the troops with poi dance and songs. No resistance was put up. The commander of the troops, Native Minister John Bryce, ordered the destruction of the village and the crop fields. Houses and fields were burned. People were raped. Hundreds were arrested and imprisoned in the South Island. The community leaders Tohu Kākahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai were given long prison sentences. @@@

aargh! is an anarchist periodical produced in
Te Whanganui-A-Tara/Wellington, Aotearoa, by the Freedom Shop Collective.

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freedomshopaotearoa.blogspot.co.nz
ISSN 2382-1353 (Print)
ISSN 2382-1361 (Online)

This *Is* NZ

"SHOCKING. SURPRISED. An attack like that in our peaceful country? Christchurch is such an open, multi-cultural city. How could that possibly happen? 'The end of our innocence'. This is not NZ."

These are the common reactions to the 15/3 terrorist attack in Christchurch. But like other stereotypes, they largely refer to myths. People want to believe that there is no far right threat in NZ, that this place is open-minded and multi-cultural.

But racism is not new. This land is built on racism. It was annexed and taken through war. The NZ law-book has been full of racist laws, such as the Suppression of Rebellion Act or the Chinese Immigrants Act that imposed an import tax on immigrants from China.

Islamophobia is also not new to this country. Most Muslims will tell you that they have experienced racial abuse at some stage. In the early 2000s in Christchurch, as well as in Wellington, Somali refugees have had credible death threats delivered to their homes by neo-Nazi groups. After 9/11 houses of Muslim leaders in NZ's bible belt suburb of Mt Roskill were attacked.

And attacks on Mosques have also happened before. In 2005, windows were smashed at an Auckland Mosque. In Dunedin people have reported "eggs being thrown at the mosque, sometimes in response to events overseas."

The existence of far-right groups who terrorise the neighbourhood, especially in Christchurch, is also well known. Anyone who has lived there can attest to that. Radio NZ's Guyon Espiner writes:

"I remember the skinheads too. We lived in a six bedroom flat on Hagley Avenue in the early 1990s and they'd walk squat and ugly down to Addington. I have a vivid memory of them marching down Hagley Ave as I watched in silence from the top floor....Yes, Christchurch had a problem with racism even then."

In the 1980s crosses were burnt outside left-wing activists' houses, KKK style, in Auckland and Christchurch.

As recent as one month ago, three Muslim women were attacked on the street by a group of skinheads in Dunedin. A witness said: "Two skinheads and a girl came up trying to rip their [veils] off their heads, saying: 'Go back to your own ... country!'.... A group of people stood watching the attack but did not step in."

It is impossible to deny that there has been a rise in far-right groups in the last couple of years. We all know about the National Front and its off-splits like the "Right Wing Resistance". Recently, there has been the European Students Association at Auckland University who made headlines in 2017, because of their slogans that were borrowed from the Nazis. They were chased off campus but still exist.

Then there is the Wellington-based Dominion Movement, an openly white supremacist group of young men who pose in macho postures with their faces pixilated. On their web site they say they are non-violent but they do organise fight clubs. One day after the Christchurch massacre, they put up a notice on their website denying any connection to the perpetrator (had anyone suggested that?), and then immediately portraying them as the victims of persecution: "In light of the atmosphere which is emerging in the wake of these events, it will be impossible for the Dominion Movement to continue our work."

Even more bizarre is the notice the National Front has put up: "At the present time, the events in Christchurch do not involve the NZ National Front or its members. The National Front does not condone or agree with this type of wanton murder." At the present time? This type of murder – other murder is OK? WTF?

Both organisations are not distancing themselves from the ideology, just from the mass murder. Just enough to avoid prosecution, should terrorism charges be laid.

Sorry, but this *is* NZ.

Not the NZ most of us want, but it is here. Stating that the mass murderer of Christchurch has an Australian passport is a convenient distraction. He lived in Dunedin, that's where he got his guns, that's where he practised shooting and that's where he got his support.

The problem with these little 'white' lies is that they create blindness. The existence of extreme-right groups and networks is simply ignored.

A few commentators have raised the issue of why the SIS, whose budget has increased dramatically in the last 20 years, did not have this guy on their radar. Neither did the Australian ASIO.

The problem is that these agencies are notorious for

their tunnel vision. They have been monitoring Muslims and the left, but not the far right. Unfortunately, this is not an oversight – they are biased from the top down. In 2018, the then head of the German domestic spy agency, Hans-Georg Maassen, publicly joined in the far-right chorus of the "fake news media" when he questioned the veracity of video footage showing groups of neo-Nazis hunting migrants in the city of Chemnitz. He had to resign, but not without presenting himself as a victim of a "radical left-wing" conspiracy in his departure speech.

Human rights lawyer Deborah Manning, who is on a government advisory panel for the intelligence agencies, says she has raised the issue of increasing Islamophobia before. Yet the SIS annual report does not mention a threat from the extreme right. It does talk a lot about Muslims, though.

She also says that questions need to be answered: "Why these attackers were not on the radar and why the community, which has been under the most suspicion, are the victims of this."

More and more evidence is emerging that some agencies had been aware of Tarrant. He had come to the attention of authorities in Bulgaria in 2016 and 2018 because he did a tour of historic battle sites of Christians vs Muslims, which apparently raised alarm bells over there. It would have been normal procedure for the Bulgarian authorities to pass that sort of information on to the person's country of origin. So did the ASIO or the SIS really not have any information, or did they just file it and forget about it?

What really needs to be addressed is the amount of space white supremacist and neo-Nazi ideas are given. Because the normalisation of this type of discourse is what encourages people to take action, or to egg each other on. And that is where we have to come back to a number of visitors we have had in the last year.

When Canadian provocateurs Stefan Molyneaux and Lauren Southern claimed that they were brutally oppressed by the Auckland City Council because it wouldn't let them spread their racism in a council owned venue, a range of people came to their defence. The "Free Speech Coalition" was formed and organised several rallies up and down the country in support of these clowns. The spokesperson was Chris Trotter, who many people locate on the left. That gave the whole operation an air of respectability. It is no coincidence that the "Free Speech" people have been very quiet since Friday. They have a lot to answer for.

Former Race Relations Commissioner Susan Devoy is spot on in her piece for the spinoff. She says to the "free speech" advocates: "do not write an op-ed today crying about how shocking yesterday's murders were. Because you helped make it happen. You helped normalise hatred in our country. You helped those murderers feel that they were representing the thoughts of ordinary New Zealanders."

Acknowledging that all this is NZ, that a terrorist isn't someone from a far-away country but can be your neighbour, and confronting it would be a first step to undoing that. @@@

Was this sign at the Wellington mosque installed by the mosque or the SIS....

TERROR IN AOTEAROA

The invasion of Rangiaowhia

ON SUNDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 1864, at the height of the NZ Wars, the colonial army attacked the small farming village of Rangiaowhia. Historian Vincent O'Malley describes the village as "a place of refuge for women, children and the elderly. It was an open village, lacking fortifications or defences of its own. The men of fighting age were amassed at Paterangi waiting for a British attack that never came."

During the attack, the whare karakia (church) was set on fire by the troops. One soldier recalled: "'we were obliged at last to set fire to the whare." Inside were twelve people, including a young boy.

According to O'Malley "one elderly man came out with his hands raised in a gesture of surrender. Despite calls to spare him, the man was immediately shot and killed. None of the other occupants of the hut dared come out following this incident. All, including a young boy, were incinerated."

Among the attackers was Gustav von Tempsky, whom the neo-fascist Dominion Movement idolise as a hero. @@@

How ready is NZ for the next wave of fascism?

IS THE RECENT WAVE of visits by far right demagogues coincidence or a trend? Why does NZ not have a far-right populist party like pretty much every European country and Australia have?

There has been no shortage of unwanted visitors to NZ this year. First there were Canadian provocateurs Lauren Southern and Stefan Molyneaux who first wanted to come then cancelled then booked again and finally arrived but didn't speak. But for their act, it wasn't necessary to speak, they wanted to create publicity and their constant whinging about being persecuted by the totalitarian government of NZ achieved that.

Then there was "Mr Brexit" Nigel Farage, whose appearance attracted a small protest, but not much attention otherwise. The Australian One Nation zombie from the 1990s, Pauline Hanson was invited by the "Government Accountability League" to come to Auckland in November 2018, but never showed up. Then in February 2019, we got a visit from another Canadian, Jordan Peterson, a rogue psychology prof whose lethal weapon is the term "multi-varied analyses" with which he smashes any argument.

So why do we not have a "Make NZ Great Again" candidate or an openly xenophobic "Independence" party like the UKIP? Where are the Lauren Southern clowns here?

There are a number of reasons. Firstly, we already have all of that in various different shades, distributed across a number of parties and personalities.

We have former Reserve Bank Governor and failed National and ACT party leader Don Brash who displays a weird combination of 19th century racism against Māori and a more modern attitude towards Asian migrants ("my wife is from Singapore"). He and his think tank, the New Zealand Centre for Political Research, regularly put out claims that Māori are really the privileged class while Pākehā are oppressed. And since 1995, long before most other countries, we have had NZ First, whose undisputed (and recycled from retirement) leader Winston Peters stands for a racism that is the exact reverse of Brash's: pro Māori and anti immigration. Of course, being a populist, he regularly flip-flops as well.

In addition, both major parties engage in both the Brash and the Peters variant of racism when it suits them. During the 2006 election campaign, National invented the slogan "Iwi vs Kiwi", and as recent as 2017, Labour found that the root cause of the housing crisis were home buyers with "Chinese sounding surnames". This overlap between Labour and NZ First partially explains why we have a coalition government of just those parties.

Both Peters and Brash are well embedded in the mainstream political spectrum and have always been supported by media personalities like the late Paul Holmes, who called the UN Secretary General a "cheeky darkie" and complained about the "hopeless failure of Māori to educate their children and stop them bashing their babies." The mainstream media also regularly regurgitate right-wing conspiracies about giant Celts having been the First Nation people of NZ. The latest version of that was TVNZ's showing of the film Skeletons in the Cupboard which was pulled from its web site after complaints due to the complete absence of facts.

Between parts of National, ACT, NZ First and the National Front there just doesn't seem room for another new-right platform (ideologically and physically – the fashionable names are all taken). This is also the view of Nigel Farage, who in a TV interview called Winston Peters a "great character" and compared him to Donald Trump.

Secondly, NZ has been spared some of the real or perceived crises that other countries have had. The 2008-2010 global financial crisis has pretty much passed us by. In North America and Europe, millions lost their homes or their life savings or were cheated out of their pensions, and on top of that their taxes were used to bail out the banks that caused the disaster in the first place. The millions who are fleeing the Middle East and Africa are also far enough away for people not to worry about.

The problem in other countries was that the parties

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who in the past had at least nominally stood for the working people and for internationalism – the social democrats in their various forms – had absolutely no answer to any of this. They couldn't because we are facing a crisis of capitalism, and the mainstream parties are subscribed to it. People knew that a vote for them would not change anything.

The radical left was also nowhere to be seen, other than with the told-you-so statement that of course, capitalism is like that. Which is correct, but doesn't really help if you have just lost your retirement savings. The only people who say they have answers are the far-right populists with their "lock her up" slogans, and therefore people started voting for them.

NZ doesn't have the same level of crisis, but it could soon come. Climate change is going to affect people here. But when the Prime Minister goes on about how it is the defining moment of her generation and then the only action is an inquiry into why petrol prices are so high, people might actually believe that it is just an invention of "the establishment" and vote accordingly.

The third reason is that NZ society has largely been apolitical for a while. The "neither left nor right, but common sense" space is thoroughly occupied by all mainstream parties. This claim to be apolitical is one of the core characteristics of right-wing populism, and it's just as wrong as the claim of neo-liberalism to be non-ideological – which has turned into a suffocating ideology.

And it is indeed difficult to tell left from right these days, even as far as protest movements are concerned. The anti-TPPA movement, which attracted thousands, had equally emancipatory and nationalistic components to it. China is ruled by the Communist Party but has a neo-liberal capitalist economy. Italy has a coalition government of the Five Stars Movement (the 5 stars being public water, sustainable transport, sustainable development, right to internet access, environmentalism) and the neo-fascist Northern League. And what are we to make of a book called Fascism – A Warning, written by the former US Secretary of State and neoconservative hard-liner Madeleine Albright?

The only movement that could justifiably call itself 'left' would be an anti-capitalist one. But that is exactly how the far-right groups present themselves. They position themselves around precisely those issues that were once occupied by the left: poverty, housing affordability, social isolation and loss of community, deterioration of services like hospitals, libraries, post offices. And unlike the supposedly left parties, they promise radical change. Therefore a far-right movement that combines Don Brash's colonial racism with Winston Peters' xenophobia could well grow here as well. And there are signs of that happening.

In March 2017, the European Students Association was founded at Auckland University. It's mottos are "strength through honour" and "our pride is our honour and loyalty", both very similar to Nazi slogans. The group claims that European students are disadvantaged over Māori and Pacifica students. In a Facebook post they stated that "these brave ANZAC heroes did not go to war so that their grandchildren and great grandchildren could be treated like second class citizens. While these brave ANZAC/Kiwi soldiers were fighting, there were scarcely any Pacific Islanders in NZ." They went on to say that the fact that "any Polynesian immigrant" can get a study loan in NZ "is an absolute disgrace to our ANZAC soldiers." Yet when people called them white supremacists, they quickly deleted the post and claimed that they were only there to "promote European culture on campus."

The group shut down quickly, not without using the tactic of self-victimisation that is so common among the right: "This move should signify where true fascism lies, as those of us who did not intend to have any political association are having our legitimate interest in a cultural club shut down with credible threats of violence."

At that stage, they were isolated and would not have received any more attention, had it not been for Winston Peters. He piped up and blamed the media for suppressing dissenting voices, which started the whole debate about supposed "free speech" and gave the group a veneer of respectability it didn't have before.

Peters then "unashamedly signed a cartoon of a frog named Pepe – the most popular symbol of the alt-right", according to the NZ Herald. He later claimed that he hadn't seen the full poster. Again, a common tactic: you do something that sends a clear signal and then immediately deny that it had any meaning.

Obviously the "credible threats of violence" that allegedly caused the group to retreat weren't all that credible after all because in September 2018, the European Students Association re-emerged with a new Facebook page, inviting people to come along "for a great night of European celebration." Their Nazi mottos are still there.

Another group that is emerging is the Wellington based Dominion Movement. They are a good example of how a neo-fascist group can sound attractive to disenfranchised people – as long as they are white.

Their programme is a wild mix of progressive sounding issues and neo-fascist goals. On the one hand they talk about the "individualist, consumerist, selfish culture in which we live" and how people "have only extremely shallow social ties" – things that most left-wing groups would subscribe to. Then they describe themselves as an "activist organisation committed to the revitalisation of our country and our people: White New Zealanders", followed by the usual lament that "white Kiwis are denigrated", even criminalised: "NZ European advocacy groups and scholarships are forbidden."

But that's not all, there are also subtle hints about their methods. While they claim to be non-violent and only interested in "education and self-improvement", they then say that "through building community, fitness, and re-connecting with our heritage, we are forging a new path for young New Zealanders in the 21st century." In case you're wondering how fitness fits in with building communities and re-connecting to heritage – it doesn't. It's a reference to fight-clubs that are popular in the neo-Nazi scene, and mentioning it is a signal that a bit of street violence is included. This is enforced by the images on their web site, which mostly depict a group of men in macho posture with their faces pixilated.

The Southern/Molyneaux debate triggered the formation of the Free Speech Coalition, which held a rally in Wellington in July 2018. Speakers included ultra-libertarian Lindsay Perigo and so far unknown "animal rights activist" Rachel Poulain. But more interesting than the speakers were the attendees. Initially there were a number of people decked in Trump merchandise and other odd folks. Then the Dominion Movement strode in, closely followed by Kerry Bolton, former head of the openly neo-Nazi National Front. In fact, it looked almost as if Bolton was chasing the young men with his walking stick. The fact that this combination of groups all attended the same rally is a new quality. What makes it even more significant is the fact that Chris Trotter, who many mistakenly locate on the left, was the spokesperson for the Free Speech Coalition.

While the European Students Association may come and go again, the Dominion Movement is definitely worth keeping an eye on. At the Free Speech Coalition rally in July, they just listened. As soon as they are given a speaking slot at these events, the bridge between openly white supremacist fascists and the pin-stripe racists in the establishment is complete @@@

The articles on the right are considered so dangerous that they cannot be displayed in shops. The articles on the left pose no danger to the public and can be displayed openly.

How you will contribute to the revolution

Based on your star sign

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Just try not to be a leader. I know, I know you secretly think you'd be the best one. I know your ideas are obviously better than other peoples' and your air of certainty means that others will often turn to you for facts or weather updates and you have good energy and drive and passion. But Aries, fuck the cult of the lone leader, that's wrong and old and we're breaking it down. Lead by empowering others.

Taurus (April 20- May 20)

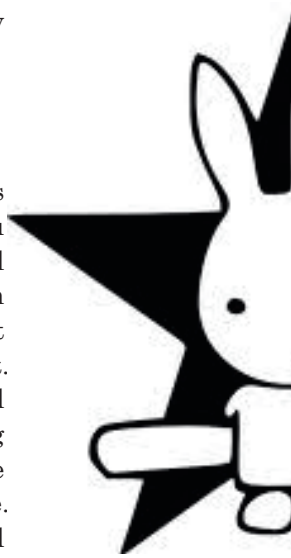
While we're pushing forward and gaining so much ground, someone has to make sure we protect what we have - and that's you Taurus. Your feet are firmly in the dirt and your hands are firmly on your hips and you're standing firm. Your energy is impressively centered. You're yelling encouragement at those wacky Sagittarius' up ahead but more importantly you're making contingency plans and piling resources. We all need homes to come back to.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Begin sleeping with a politician. Feel deep guilt because you're sleeping with a politician. Keep doing it anyway. Convince yourself there's something real between you two; a spark that could blossom into something more. Notice that it isn't blossoming - they're still a politician. Reveal their secrets publicly. Watch the facade crumble. Watch as the people begin to rise up.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Baking cookies is a great way to lure people in and ask them to sign a petition. Then gently ask for their email address for further communication, and obviously for their postal code for demographic purposes. Do this at every community fair, farmers market, sunny afternoon, empty street corner. Suddenly you have an extensive communication network based on neighbourhood proximity and you're connecting people with the resources and support systems available to them and you're building alternative community structures to replace the corrupt, crumbling, increasingly unnecessary government. Nice one.



Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Get out there. You'll love the streets once you're on them. As soon as you realise rules can be broken you'll become an addict. Smash an unimportant object. Throw a rock at a slightly more important object. Swear at authority figures. Hold hands in solidarity. Sing revolutionary chants with admirable gusto and impressive tonal range. You'll grow into your bravery and represent the heroic overthrower we all deserve. Just remember to keep track of why you're doing it.

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

You literally planned the revolution. By the time it starts you don't really feel like you need to be that involved because you've already assigned all of the roles and responsibilities in a way that is fair, balanced and somehow also organic. You've structured a long-term campaign with clear messaging and ample community engagement and now you can sit back and watch your comrades storm the castle and then eat the packed lunches you coordinated in advance.

Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Peacekeeper. Thank god. There's a lot of egos and energy in the revolution and you're facilitating, communicating, collaborating, and actually listening to people. You're like glue but more fluid. Like binding ties but less restrictive. You're keeping the people's uprising communal and collective by paying attention to one individual at a time.

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

Someone has to make the revolution seem sexy and mysterious. It's you. Unfortunately most activists are too busy to shower heaps or rub coconut oil on our bodies or to speak in a slow, sultry way. So that's all on you Scorpio. Always be in the room but never too central. Just kind of loitering at the edges in an involved but aloof way that makes others think damn, I want to become involved with that individual, and eventually with their revolutionary struggle, as well.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

You printed the leaflets and then came up with a new leaflet design which is better and now you're postering that design on very high buildings and you've just come up with a new campaign slogan which you're very excited about and you can't wait to get everyone involved unfortunately you don't have time to finish sticking up this poster because you just came up with a new idea it's very exciti-

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

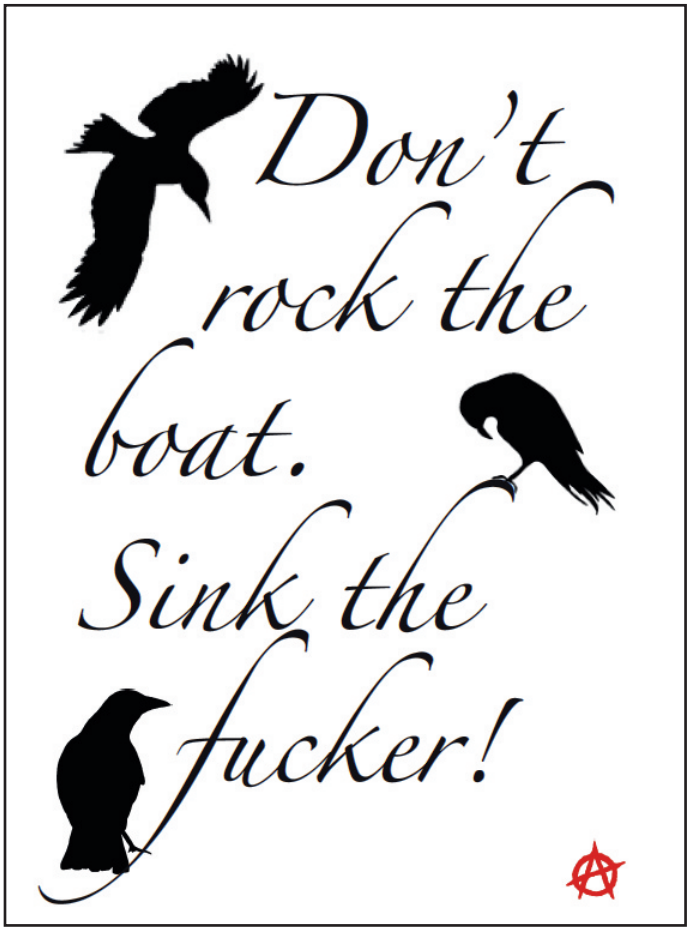
Look Capricorn I know it's very upsetting that people are saying things like 'all cops are bastards' and 'your wealth is not earned but stolen from the working classes' but those things are true, you know it somewhere deep, deep down. You can be super helpful in a guiding, big-picture thinking way — once you break down the hierarchical, capitalist structures that shape your thinking. Start by reading aspirational utopian literature and then team up with Virgo to make it happen.

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

You see through the bullshit, which means you're gonna have to spend a lot of time helping other people see through the bullshit too. That's a bit of an arduous task for a visionary like you but it's important. They won't understand you at first and you'll have to keep trying in different ways. But your messy ideas, communicated in the abstract, will be the gateway to revolutionary thinking for many.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

You might feel like you're being washed away by the inevitable tides of change, that the revolution is sweeping you up like a small weak leaf in rapids. That's because you've always felt it coming, deep in your gut. We don't usually talk about the overthrow of pseudo-democratic capitalist structures in spiritual terms, but it's okay to trust your intuition. Remind others to stop and take a breath. Make sure no important actions are taken on the new moon. Pull a tarot card for your comrades on the morning of the uprising. If the card is not fortuitous, pull another.



What happened to the revolution?

The state of the world

THE ECONOMIC and political system that rules the world is in crisis. Global capitalism (in its modern form of neo-liberalism) is pushing more and more people into poverty. Even the middle classes of industrialised countries, who owe their very existence to capitalism, are now feeling the pinch and people lose their pensions (Greece) or their house (USA) or can't even afford to buy one in the first place (NZ). A permanent job and a home, however shit they may be, are increasingly seen as a privilege.

For people in the 'rest' of the world, the prospect of ever escaping abject poverty is approaching zero. A lot of them realise that every bit of 'aid' generously given to them makes things worse and they risk literally everything to get to a country with better prospects (and often lose everything, including their lives).

Where World Bank aid programmes haven't reached yet, endless wars are raging, often initiated by western 'intervention' and locally led by religious fanatics.

And we haven't even started talking about the effects of climate change. Who would have thought that 40 years later, the old punk slogan that there is "No Future" would turn out to be a realistic prediction.

The political system of liberal democracy is also falling apart. Right-wing populism is on the rise wherever we look and each daily episode of the never ending Brexit soap (in its third season now) gives further insight into the credibility crisis the political party system is in.

In short, the world is in the perfect condition for a revolution. Never in the last 100 years has the failure of the dominant system been more evident. Yet absolutely nothing happens, particularly in the 'Western World' where capitalism is entrenched as never before and the radical left has become all but irrelevant.

Why?

Neoliberalism [(1)] has tainted us, and in this country we have generations now who have known nothing else. Neoliberalism has destroyed communities and individualised social issues. Most people have no desire, let alone energy, to build communities, exchange ideas with friends and colleagues or simply think about the world.

The individualisation and the "end of society" (Margaret Thatcher) that are at the core of neo-liberal ideology have pushed us back into the dark ages where all our energy is used to survive but we accept this without argument. The constant pressure to "sell" ourselves, to improve, to consume, to have a perfect body and be healthy and fit – the "Uberisation" of life – has been internalised.

Under neoliberalism we have moved from collective action to individualism (helped by the replacement of meaningful political discourse with "expert" opinions and "evidence-based policies"). The left has adapted to that by retracting to identity politics.

What is the problem, what went wrong?

The French historian François Cusset writes that

> *the left "has swapped social equality for diversity and has traded the class struggle, deemed a lost cause, for the condemnation of discrimination, as this is better suited to the conformism of the media and the ferment of social networks."*

(How the world swung to the right).

That's the problem, in a nutshell.

The focus has changed now from a politics of liberation to a politics of inclusion. Liberation movements are seen as from another era. We are no longer fighting to abolish institutions but we are fighting to improve those institutions. Marriage is an example: rather than continuing to fight to abolish that institution we instead began to fight for marriage equality and thereby strengthened it. The result is that amongst

(1) Between 1984 and 1993, New Zealand underwent radical economic reform, moving from what had probably been the most protected, regulated and state-dominated system of any capitalist democracy to an extreme position at the open, competitive, free-market end of the spectrum.

many people, marriage is now seen as the norm.

The focus has also changed from the collective to the individual. Many believe that change can come about by changing individual behaviour so the focus is on improving ourselves rather than working together (warts and all) for an alternative world. Instead of fighting for te Reo to be a core subject in all schools, we are putting energy into learning it ourselves (there's nothing wrong with individuals learning te Reo, but this is not a political fight).

This can also be seen in relation to climate change. Because political activity has been reduced to individual consumer behaviour, the consequence of taking climate change seriously would be for everyone to never fly, drive a car, or heat their homes again and to stop using anything made of steel or concrete (all things that involve burning fossil fuels). When the starting point is that consumer behaviour will stop climate change, then the prospect is too daunting to contemplate and therefore no one does anything. Or when things are done, it is individualised (eg. not use plastic bags). And when good actions are organised there is very little support from from other groups. The School Strike could have been turned into a General Strike.

And we have lost sight of our internationalist perspective. When capitalism seriously started ignoring national boundaries and operating on a global level, what was the response of the radical left? Largely a retreat to nationalism. The anti-globalisation movement's response to the increasing power of multi-national corporations was largely a demand to strengthen national sovereignty to counter that power. Instead of demanding the complete abolition of nation states, given that corporations were already doing that as far as trade and money was concerned, the left insisted on retaining the concept of nation states.The protests against the various free trade agreements contained a large proportion of nationalistic elements, but instead of attacking that tendency and coming up with an alternative vision of a world without borders, the radical left joined in.

What way forward?

It is not surprising that the liberal left has no answers to the crisis of capitalism, because it doesn't oppose it. It is only now that part of the liberal left is realising how the right has managed to create a global movement, whereas they are tied up in petty arguments. The result is Brexit.

It is also not surprising that the liberal democracies have no answers to the rise of the populist right because their failure to provide a perspective for people is the reason for it.

This should be to our advantage, no one else on the left has any idea what to do. This is our chance to come up with a vision of how a different world could look.

There have been recent movements for radical change but most of these failed, or worse turned into their opposite. We have seen resistance struggles that gave many hope but when the goal was only regime change, the victory was not sweet.

The Arab Spring looked hopeful but couldn't have ended worse – the war in Syria is never ending and the emerging one Yemen is shaping up to be even worse; in Libya, Gaddafi was replaced with NATO bombardment and ongoing civil war; Egypt has a military regime.

Where liberation movements are successful they were not focussed on regime change but on creating autonomous communities, examples include the Zapatistas in Mexico and Rojava, the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria.

Maybe that is a start for all of us. We need to stop getting tied up in reformist battles and instead focus on real alternatives. And we can learn from examples where there have been revolutions that did flourish.

Neither the Zapistita or Rojava revolutions developed overnight (nor did the Spanish Revolution), they grew from a process of community education and empowerment so when the time was right the revolution could begin. The Spanish Revolution only took off because there was an infrastructure of functioning collectives in a range of areas (production, distribution, housing) already in existence.

We have to do the years of organising and talking to people who aren't on our side yet. The NGOs have established a culture of running "winnable" campaigns (because it is their funding model) and we have been sucked into that. We have to stop aiming for short term wins and look at the long term. It means a lot of hard work for a long period of time.

The far right is way ahead of us. They gain support by pointing out what is wrong and when people are listening to them, they then give simple answers – they blame 'others'. And their answers are so simple that they are easily able to use social media to get their message out there.

Ultimately, they have a vision of a future that is different from the parliamentary democracy of today – and it's scary. And they are organising globally. Trump's former advisor Steve Bannon is constantly touring Europe to unify the populist movements there.

The radical left on the other hand, is failing. Our energy is primarily put into one-off campaigns and reforming the system to ensure equality for all. We do not focus on building long-term movements and we do not work at organising locally or even articulating a radical left position. We are letting the populist movements rise.

> *"Our era will be remembered for the triumphant march of a globally unifying rightwing – a Nationalist International – that sprang out of the cesspool of financialised capitalism."*

Yanis Varoufakis, co-founder of the Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25) and former Greek finance minister.

This is what we're up against.

We need to return to demanding radical change instead of trying to conserve a system that is not ours anyway. We need to demand the abolition of nation states instead of waving flags and lamenting the loss of national sovereignty in free trade agreements. We need to demand the abolition of property ownership instead of participating in the debate about the level of capital gains tax.

And part of the work is to undo the apathy that 30 years of neoliberalism has created, to create communities. @@@

Siege of Ngatapa

ON 5 JANUARY 1869 Crown forces stripped and executed captured prisoners.

A member of the Armed Constabulary J P Ward, wrote that:

"In all some 130 odd of the defenders of Ngatapa were captured in the bush and gorges below the pa where they lay asleep having had neither sleep nor water for 2 days. They were marched up the hill side again under the outer wall – as it were – of the pa they had defended so long and so heroically, stripped of every vestige of clothing they possessed and SHOT – shot like dogs. There was no mention of a trial or if any or all of them had participated in the PB [Poverty Bay, Matawhero] Massacre. That did not matter to us one straw. They were shot and their bodies left to swelter and rot under the summer's sun and bones to bleach to this day. And all this – and very much more – as done beneath the meteor flag of Mighty England."

The Waitangi Tribunal estimated between 86 and 128 prisoners were executed, demonstrating "how thin the veneer of the rule of law could be in colonial New Zealand".@@@

October 15 2007

IN OCTOBER 2007 armed police invaded Rūātoki & also raided houses up & down the country, arresting many. Police wanted to charge people under the Terrorism Suppression Act but ultimately only four went to trial on 'organised criminal gang' charges. To show how dangerous these people were, submissions presented by the prosecutor included: 'evidence that one of the defendants owned two books, one about the Zapatistas & one about Che Guevara', someone had Oliver Stone movies and a member of the gang that the people were charged with organising had been recorded saying 'smash the state'.

Watch 'Operation 8, Deep in the Forest' (2011) & 'The Price of Peace' (2015). @@@

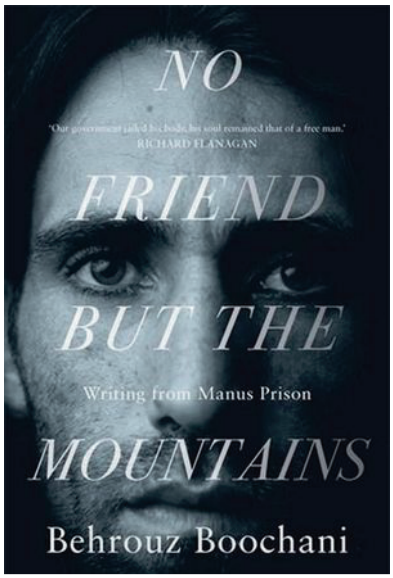
No Friend but the Mountains – Writing from Manus Prison

BOOK REVIEW

Behrouz Boochani, translation by Omid Tofighian (2018)

THAT THE KURDISH PEOPLE have "No Friend but the Mountains" is an old Kurdish saying, based on centuries of persecution. In this book by the Kurdish journalist and refugee Behrouz Boochani it takes on a personal meaning. These are the observations of prisoner MEG45, as the Australian authorities refer to Behrouz, from his first attempt to reach Australia from Indonesia in a leaky boat that sank half way there in mid 2013 to him witnessing the murder of Reza Berati in February 2014 on Manus Island.

He and his 700 fellow inmates on Manus ended up there almost in a time warp. They left Indonesia when it was still possible to reach Australia and claim asylum there, but while they were waiting on Christmas Island for their claims to be heard, PM Kevin Rudd (Labor) – fearing an election loss if he was seen to be too 'soft' on refugees – put in place the "Turn Back the Boats" policy which abolished the right to seek asylum for anyone arriving by boat. One day they were flown to Manus Island without having any idea why, and they have been languishing there ever since.



The book is a mixture of personal observations of his fellow inmates, their situation and the dynamics created by that, and an astute analysis of how a prison system works. Although always empathic and never judgemental, the personal observations at times feel a bit voyeuristic, as if Behrouz himself was a detached observer and not also an active part of the dynamics he describes. His choice of names for his companions – he rarely uses their real names, instead he uses descriptions like "Friend Of The Blue Eyed Boy", partly in order to protect their identity – can add to this impression, although I'm sure that wasn't his intention. The episodes would be too depressing to read if there weren't always glimmers of hope through unexpected acts of kindness and solidarity among the refugees.

Intertwined with the personal observations is a detailed description of what Behrouz calls the "Kyriarchal System" (a multi-layered system of oppression and domination) that is in place on Manus. I have never seen a clearer analysis of a prison and torture system – one that can only be written by someone who has experienced it. He describes the different roles and hierarchies within the staff (local Manusians at the bottom, a mythical 'boss' at the top who no one has ever seen), the system of humiliation and punishment (if one wants to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, one never leaves the queue), the arbitrariness of incomprehensible decisions and how trying to make sense of them literally drives people insane. The result is that suicide attempts are a daily occurrence, during the time period covered in the book seven people have died on Manus, four in Nauru and one on Christmas Island. Anyone wanting to understand why prisons need to be abolished should read this book.

Unfortunately, Behrouz's story doesn't end when the book ends. He and 400 other men are still incarcerated on Manus Island, under even worse conditions than what he describes of the now defunct Regional Processing Centre. The Australian owned and run centre was closed on 31 October 2017, followed by a month-long period of relative autonomy. The guards and other staff had abandoned the site and turned electricity and water supplies off. People were asked to move to three other centres on Manus, but they refused. For a few weeks they organised their own lives and had a degree of control over their lives they hadn't had since their detention and haven't regained until now. Eventually they were forcefully removed and have since been languishing in inadequate accommodation, with no hope of ever leaving the place, and with conditions continually worsening. About two hundred have been settled mostly in the US and Canada, but anyone from one of the countries on Trump's banned list doesn't have a chance.

Several more have died since the closing of the original Processing Centre. Almost all of them have developed mental health problems that go untreated.

The most amazing aspect of the book is the conditions under which it was written. Prisoners on Manus don't have access to pen and paper, they can't send or receive correspondence. All they have are cell phones they have smuggled in and which may be confiscated any minute. Behrouz's book (almost 400 pages) was written one text message at a time. One can only

imagine how convoluted the editing and translation process was. And if you think this is incredible, watch the film "Chauka, please tell us the time", which Behrouz filmed entirely on his phone.

No Friend but the Mountains won Australia's top literary prize, but I do wonder how much white guilt complex is involved in all the accolades that have been heaped upon Behrouz by the literature world. It's not like the conditions in the Australian detention system weren't known prior to the book. Other journalists have reported, documentaries have been made and Behrouz himself has been writing a regular column in the *Guardian*. Activists have campaigned for years, tens of thousands have protested. The prize is of little practical value to Behrouz, the usual benefits like publishing contracts are unavailable to him and he can't spend the prize money on Manus. There is only one thing that can really help him and the other prisoners on Manus and Nauru: that Australia abolishes its brutal border regime. @@@

How the world swung to the right

BOOK REVIEW

François Cusset

A LOOK at the world today is indeed scary. Right-wing populism is on the rise wherever we look, while the parliamentary democracy with its traditional political party system is falling apart amidst a serious credibility crisis, as can be witnessed in the daily instalments of the ongoing Brexit soap. Poverty and homelessness are on the rise and the endless wars are creating ever more refugees. And we haven't even started talking about the effects of climate change.

In his book *How The World Swung To The Right*, French historian François Cusset takes a look at how this came about.

He places the beginning of what he calls the counter-revolution with the (CIA induced) military coup in Chile in 1973, when democratically elected president Salvador Allende was ousted by General Augusto Pinochet, whose brutal military rule lasted until 1990. Apart from the military takeover, Cusset also identifies Chile as the first experiment in neo-liberalism. From there it went to various other western countries in the 1980s, including NZ, and spread to pretty much the rest of the world in the '90s. Cusset labels the 2000s as the period of re-nationalisation (of losses), marked by the enormous bank bailouts. Over here, it wasn't so much the banks that needed bailing, it was Air NZ and Kiwi Rail that had been run into the ground.

Today, the neo-liberal doctrine is so entrenched that it doesn't appear as an ideology any more: "With the aid of pills and coaches, diets and the media, we all must aspire to produce the best version of ourselves, to be a complete entrepreneur of ourselves." Cusset calls this the "Uberization of life" and goes into a lot of detail about how traditional social entities have been replaced by "lifestyle choices". His devastating verdict is that the left has traded the class war for a fight against discrimination. I tried to argue against this in my head, but I lost.

So much for the excellent analysis in the first two parts of the book. The third part promises to show a path forward out of this situation, but doesn't really deliver. Cusset correctly states that pretty much all social movements of the last ten years have either failed or turned into their opposite, from the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela to the Arab Spring to Occupy. The only exception, according to Cusset, are the Zapatistas.

However, he then inexplicably arrives at at the conclusion that, because everything has turned to custard, "we are just a step away from an active and global resistance". All that is needed, he says, is that the global North and South get together, the cities join with the countryside, the large movements with the small local ones – that is, pretty much everything has to change first – but then all it takes is a "decision nudge", the final straw, to trigger the global uprising. That seems rather unrealistically optimistic. I think we will have to be satisfied with small achievements for the near future. @@@

The British royal family saluting in the 1930s.

RECIPE

Antifa Energy Bars

Energy Power Bar

1.25 cups sugar

1.25 cups oil

2.5 cups goop (egg replacement)

2.25 tsp salt

2.5 mashed bananas

5 cups flour

2.5 cups sesame seeds

2.5 cups raises

2.5 cups chocolate chips

a pinch of cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 177C. Sift dry ingredients together (except sugar). Blend oil, sugar and eggs in a seperate bowl and mix well.

2. Mash bananas. Add them to wet ingredients. Combine wet and dry ingredients together until well mixed.

3. Pour batter into greased and floured baking trays about 1" deep. Bake for 30 minutes.

Antifa Scrambled Eggs

WARNING: Animal products are required. Vegan substitutes will not do the job.

Serves all.

Take eggs and crack them on the skull of a racist.

Enjoy!

#eggboy

GOOP Egg replacer

Simple Egg Replacer:

Simmer together 4Tbsps flaxseeds in 1/3 cup of water (1 part flax seeds : 3 parts water) in a saucepan on med-high heat until it looks bubbly and foamy. Remove from heat and allow to cool for 20 mins. When the mixture looks snotty and mucous, then it's ready! 1 cup of goop equals about 4 eggs.

WHITE SUPREMACY IS TERRORISM

NO ROOM FOR RACISM HERE

Image: Anti-Racist Ōtautahi

15.3.2019 NEVER FORGET